

**STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN DANNY K. DAVIS AT THE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
HEARING
ON FEDERAL HIRING PROCESS**

Monday, June 7, 2004

Chairwoman Davis, congressional staff, and all of the witnesses who traveled from Washington to participate in this hearing, welcome to Chicago.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the General Accounting Office (GAO), public interest groups, and the media have predicted a wave of retirements in the federal civil service. More than ever, a streamlined and efficient federal hiring process will be critical, as we strive to hire talented and qualified personnel to fill the positions of those who will soon retire.

There are many aspects to the federal hiring process. First, the hiring agency must notify the public that a position is open and that applications will be accepted for the job. All applicants are then screened for minimum qualifications. Those who meet the minimum qualifications are assessed according to the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to perform the job. Finally, federal agencies must rate and rank candidates based on their experience, training, and education.

In 2002, GAO surveyed the human resource directors at 24 major federal departments and agencies. Thirteen of the human resources directors reported that lengthy hiring time was a “great to very great problem”, and eight stated that hiring time was a “moderate problem.” Among the reasons cited were the manual processing of thousands of applicants; the lack of understanding of personnel hiring rules and procedures; and a paperwork-intensive hiring process that requires rating and ranking of applicants and the creation of lists of the best qualified applicants.

Congress and OPM have taken steps to address many of these problems. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 contained new governmentwide hiring flexibilities that could help agencies in expediting and controlling their hiring process. The Act permitted category ranking, which is an alternative ranking and selection procedure that can expand the pool of qualified job applicants from which agency managers can select. Agencies also were given direct hiring authority, which allows an agency to appoint individuals to positions without adhering to certain hiring requirements. Finally, the Act also established a Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) in each of the 24 federal agencies to advise and assist the head of each agency with human capital management efforts.

Chairwoman Davis and I requested a GAO report on the federal hiring process that will be released today. Unfortunately, the report found that agencies are making limited use of the hiring flexibilities enacted by Congress and implemented by OPM almost a year ago. Additionally, it appears that federal agencies are not using long-existing personnel flexibilities.

GAO also has released two reports that document the importance of succession planning and the need to incorporate diversity as a management initiative in the senior executive service.

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Federal agencies must ensure that they are hiring a diverse pool of candidates for federal jobs, particularly at the senior management levels. To this end, I am pleased that OPM will be hosting a job fair at the State of the African-American Male Conference I will be holding at Malcolm X College on Saturday, June 26th.

The federal government is at an important crossroads. We have an opportunity to improve the effectiveness of the federal hiring process and the diversity of the workforce, particularly at the senior levels of government. The GAO report is telling us that we are not there yet. Let's not squander this rare opportunity.

I look forward to the testimony of the witnesses and thank them for being here today.

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